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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this practicum was to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats surrounding the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program at Dowling College (Oakdale, New York), as perceived by the Business Administration Division faculty. Faculty were surveyed to determine perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and common themes in their responses were identified. A strategic plan was developed, utilizing environmental scanning, which involved examination of the internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats. The major weakness ascertained was lack of leadership in the program. In response to this finding, an MBA Director has been elected. A second finding was that a variety of majors, such as Finance and Marketing, are needed to increase the program's scope. Other recommendations included: increase advertising; examine the feasibility of weekend classes and comprehensive examinations before graduation; strengthen admissions counseling; strengthen advisement; examine admissions criteria and possibly make them more stringent; improve the capstone course, "The Management Game;" integrate computers into courses; develop courses in other disciplines; utilize corporate executives as guest lecturers; emphasize thesis writing and utilize English professors; and create an MBA Executive program. Contains 11 references. (KM)

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# ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING AS A FIRST STEP TO STRATEGIC PLANNING IN THE M.B.A. PROGRAM AT DOWLING COLLEGE

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

by

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Dowling College

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PHILADELPHIA CLUSTER

A PRACTICUM PRESENTED TO NOVA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

NOVA UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING AS A FIRST STEP TO STRATEGIC PLANNING IN THE M.B.A. PROGRAM AT DOWLING COLLEGE

James F. Newman, M.B.A.

The purpose of this practicum was to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the M.B.A. Program at Dowling College as perceived by the Business Administration Division faculty.

The faculty at Dowling College contend that the program needs strengthening. Problems that existed were determined and examined. Strategic plans were developed to help ensure the success and survival of the program. In order to develop these strategic plans, environmental scanning was done. Environmental scanning, for this study, entailed an examination of the internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats. Through the use of a survey instrument in which the faculty listed perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, responses were examined and common themes identified.

Faculty members were forthright in listing perceived weaknesses as well as strengths, opportunities, and threats. This information provided the data needed to make recommendations for the future. The major weakness ascertained was lack of leadership in the program.

Secondly, a variety of majors, such as Finance and Marketing, are needed to increase the program's scope.

Therefore, the major recommendation made was to select or appoint an M.B.A. Coordinator or Director. In fact, this has been done. A Director has been elected by the faculty and approved by the Administration. At this time additional majors cannot be instituted, however, courses in other disciplines are going to be introduced to broaden the scope of offerings. Other recommendations included:

1. Increase advertising.

2. Examine the feasibility of weekend classes.

3. Examine the feasibility of comprehensive examinations before graduation.

4. Strengthen the admissions counseling procedures.

5. Strengthen advisement procedures.

6. Coordinate files between Admissions and the Registrar's office.

7. Examine the admissions criteria and possibly make them more stringent.

8. Improve the capstone course, The Management Game.

9. Integrate computers into most courses.

10. Develop additional courses in other disciplines.

11. Utilize corporate executives as guest lecturers.

12. Emphasize thesis writing. Utilize English professors.

13. Create an M.B.A. Executive program.

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# INTRODUCTION

The M.B.A. Program at Dowling College, in the minds of faculty members in the Business Division, needed strengthening. Enrollment had been smaller than anticipated. The governance procedures were fragmented, and there has been a lack of leadership in the Program because of this fragmentation. Faculty members had been stating that there were problems in the Program that had to be determined and examined.

The purpose of this practicum was to determine the stengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, (SWOT) as perceived by the Business Administration faculty, and to examine those that impact on the program. Strengths are the strongest attributes of the program, i.e., what is done well. Weaknesses are those internal conditions that may prevent Dowling from obtaining its objectives. Opportunities are conditions or situations which Dowling can exploit to expand or to improve the program while threats are those external conditions or situations that may prevent Dowling from accomplishing its objectives. This program is a major one at Dowling and a supplier of incremental income to Dowling College and must survive. Enrollment in the M.B.A. Program at Dowling College for the past semester increased by a smaller percentage than had been anticipated and the reasons had to be found if possible.

The problems of identifying and measuring components of such complex organizations (colleges) or of analyzing and evaluating their performance are enormous, and these problems are complicated by uncertainties about how to identify and demonstrate the quality and quantity of education, research and public service (Balderston, 1974:IX). In this practicum an attempt was made to determine the SWOT of the Program in order to improve the quality of the Program so survival would be ensured. What any one institution should do to find a balance among the criteria for survival, stability and excellence depends, of course, on its particular circumstances and on the outlook and values of those who seek a viable path for it (Balderston, 1974:269).

A strategic plan must be developed if the program is to succeed and survive. Success and survival depend upon strategic planning, strategic management, and sound organizational policies. Strategic management involves all aspects of the management process that are concerned with ensuring that an organization is viable and that its resources are adapted to its environment in a way that permits efficient achievement of the organization's goals, using appropriate courses of action with acceptable degrees of risk (Paine and Anderson, 1983:6). Strategic management stresses managing the organization's relationships with its environment as a means to mission accomplishment (Higgins, 1983:4). Higgins (1983:11) also

states that the mission is the primary consideration upon which organizational objectives, policy, and strategy are based. Policy, as used here, designates broad guidance created to ensure the successful establishment of objectives and successful formulation, implementation and control of strategy.

Strategic planning involves environmental scanning, both internally and externally. The term environment refers to those inputs to an organization which are under the control of other organizations or interest groups or are influenced by interaction of several groups (Paine and Anderson, 1983:16). Balderston (1974:13) contends that

> The campus administration must look in two directions: to the relations of the university with its external environment, and to its internal environment, the ongoing institutional processes and constituencies.

Micek (1985:1-4) contends that administrators must monitor and adapt to a rapidly changing environment while maintaining quality and improving productivity with limited resources in order to maintain some control over the destiny of the institution. To Micek, strategic planning provides the context and structure for decision making and aids in management and organizational development. Micek utilizes the Steiner approach by asking two questions:

1. What's possible given opportunities and constraints (threats)?

2. What can and can't we do given strengths and weaknesses?

Micek further states that answers to these basic questions will lead to the establishment of broad goals, strategic directions and thrusts and the setting of priorities for program development, student recruitment and development, faculty and staff development, facilities and equipment improvement, improved management practices and public relations and image building.

Many strategists, particularly George Steiner (1979), utilize a SWOT system that determines the current and future internal strengths (S), and weaknesses (W) as well as the external opportunities (O) and threats (T) in order to determine where they are, where they want to be, and how they plan to get there - the essence of strategy. Paine and Anderson (1983:61) state that this first step, environmental analysis, is defined as identifying the specific set of factors which impact most significantly on the firm. Determining an advantageous position for an organization requires examining its external environment for conditions that pose threats or opportunities. Determining how the organization can secure an advantageous position also requires looking inside it to see what weaknesses and strengths are there (Hampton, 1981:187-190). Micek (1985:6) calls this process internal auditing. Higgins (1983:33) states that identifying SWOT is essential if the organization is to be successful.

Micek (1985:2) maintains that an organization using strategic planning will maintain a sense of direction and control and recognize opportunities and be in a position to understand its position in terms of growth potential. Drucker (1964:5) stated that opportunities are the key to organizational and managerial success. Drucker observed that solving a problem merely restores normality, but results come from the exploitation of opportunities. From environmental scanning, strategists perform their most important roles by determining the organizational objectives and formulating the strategies to accomplish these objectives. Environmental scanning, as outlined by Steiner and other experts in the management field, is the subject of this practicum. Environmental scanning was one of the important topics covered in the Governance Seminar conducted by Nova University.

## BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The M.B.A. Program at Dowling College, like so many other M.B.A. programs, has certain strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Responding to growing criticism from the business community, graduate business schools across the country are examining and changing their programs. Swartz (1985:35) has written

> Professors at the U. of Pennsylvania's Wharton School are regularly asked to analyze a company's strengths and weaknesses. But recently, some of them turned their sights inward and produced a phone-book-thick plan to overhaul Wharton.

This practicum was an examination of SWOT as perceived by the Dowling College M.B.A. faculty. Strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats are not always perceived or determined in the same ways. After collecting the responses of the faculty members, the responses were examined. Common themes were identified and presented to the Business Administration Division faculty and to the Vice-President of Academic Affairs and appropriate committees.

Prospects (opportunities) and requirements for success must be analyzed while strengths and weaknesses must be assessed. The college must respond to its threats, capitalize on its opportunities, play down and overcome its weaknesses and then capitalize on its strengths. Policies for the future must be established. Policies promote uniform handling of similar activities; introduce continuity of action and decisions; act as automatic decision makers; offer predetermined answers to routine problems; afford managers a mechanism for insulating themselves from hasty and ill-considered requests for change; and serve as a major communications link to an organization's several constituencies. Policies flow from an organization's strategy (Thompson and Strickland, 1978:22-23). To be successful in strategic management requires knowledge about the present situation, the determination of strategic objectives, the implementation and ensuing evaluation of these objectives

and the implementation methods. In this practicum, the perceived present situation and the future opportunities and threats were examined.

## PROCEDURES

In order to scan the Dowling M.B.A. environment for perceptions of the faculty, the following procedures were followed.

### POPULATION

The SWOT survey was sent to the ten members of the Business Administration Division. All members of the Business Administration Division at Dowling College teach in the M.B.A. Program at some time during the course of the year and thus are in a position to comment on it. Nine members responded. Responses were examined and common themes identified and listed. This list was then distributed to the nine members for further analysis and comment in order to respond constructively and make recommendations.

### SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The survey instrument (Appendix A) consisted of a letter and four pages - one each for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Faculty members were asked to list their perceptions of the SWOT so common themes could be identified and analyzed and appropriate recommendations made.

## DATA TREATMENT

The responses were analyzed and tabulated, listed in rank order and presented to the appropriate parties for future action. No statistical analysis was made of the data other than ranking according to the number of repeat responses. Tables were used to show the responses according to category (SWOT).

## LIMITATIONS

For this study, the following limitations were expected. Since Dowling is a small college and the Business Division faculty is only a small part of the college's overall faculty, the results of the distributed survey may not have brought out all the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Consideration was given to the possibility that some members of the Division would not respond even if they were encouraged to do so. If such did occur, the study may not have been totally effective.

## ASSUMPTIONS

One assumption was that the entire Business Division faculty would feel the same need and urgency for this study and would respond. Another assumption was that the perceptions of these individuals would differ enough so that a broad spectrum of ideas would emerge. That the results of this study would be clear enough in order to

make recommendations was a major assumption. Also, it was assumed that these recommendations would be accepted and acted upon and that the ensuing actions would strengthen the program.

## RESULTS

The major result of this study was a determination of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the M.B.A. Program at Dowling as perceived by a very important constituency, the faculty that teach in and have decision-making authority in the Program. The decision-making authority falls in the area of curriculum, scheduling, etc. There was a 90% response rate to the survey. Even so, certain strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats may not have been mentioned.

The results of this study were examined for common themes, listed (Tables 1-4), and submitted to the Divsion faculty, the Vice-President of Academic Affairs and certain concerned committees. The major weakness disclosed was that leadership was lacking in the program. Another major weakness disclosed and major concern of the faculty was the lack of majors in Finance and Marketing.

### STRENGTHS

The major strengths of the program, as perceived by the faculty, were the dedicated, concerned full-time

faculty in the Business Administration Division, the ideal location of Dowling College, the lack of competition and that the program was financially beneficial to the college. Other strengths listed were that the program conveniently serves the community and that the Dowling undergraduate programs feed students into the M.B.A. Program. The faculty responses are listed in rank order in Table 1.

Table 1

Strengths of the M.B.A. Program as Perceived by the Business Faculty

| Strengths | Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| N = 9 | | |
| 1. Dedicated, concerned F.T. faculty participation. All are concerned with the success of the program. | 6 | 66.66 |
| 2. Ideal location of Dowling to serve Suffolk County. | 5 | 55.55 |
| 3. Lack of competition. To date it is the only M.B.A. in Suffolk County. | 4 | 44.44 |
| 4. Financially beneficial to the college. | 4 | 44.44 |
| 5. Conveniently serves the community. | 2 | 22.22 |
| 6. Dowling's undergraduate programs feed students into the program. | 2 | 22.22 |
| 7. Fairly homogeneous group of students. | 1 | 11.11 |
| 8. Balanced curriculum for preparing managers who are "generalists". | 1 | 11.11 |
| 9. The environment for learning is excellent. | 1 | 11.11 |

Table 1 (Continued)

Strengths of the M.B.A. Program as Perceived by the Business Faculty

| Strengths | Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| N = 9 | | |
| 10. Faculty attitude is excellent. Interaction with students is excellent. | 1 | 11.11 |
| 11. The Administration shows concern for the Program's future. | 1 | 11.11 |

WEAKNESSES

Faculty members were very forthright in listing the weaknesses as they perceived them. One major concern of the respondents was the lack of leadership, i.e., the lack of a coordinator or director in the program. This has created a fragmented leadership which creates other problems. The faculty felt that the lack of leadership resulted in less course development and thus less program development. Another major concern was that there were not enough members of the full-time Business Administration faculty teaching in the program. This is true since most of the full-time faculty are involved in teaching days in the undergraduate programs. Another major concern was the limited number of Ph.Ds that teach in the program. The lack of specializations such as Finance and Marketing was seen as a serious weakness. Several respondents noted that there was no apparent

overall goal or objective towards which the educational objectives of the program are directed. A lack of computer integration in courses and a lack of rigor in the capstone course, the Management Game, were noted. Problems were also noted in the recruitment, admissions and advisement procedures. Faculty responses also indicated a concern that admissions standards were too low. Responses are listed in rank order in Table 2.

Table 2

Weaknesses of the M.B.A. Program as Perceived by the Business Faculty

| Weaknesses | Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| N = 9 | | |
| 1. Not enough full-time Ph.Ds teaching in the program. | 7 | 77.77 |
| 2. More full-time faculty member teaching needed. Too many courses taught by adjuncts. | 7 | 77.77 |
| 3. Lack of a full-time coordinator or director. | 6 | 66.66 |
| 4. Lack of specializations in the program. It is the only L.I. based M.B.A. program with only one specialization. | 6 | 66.66 |
| 5. There is no apparent overall goal or directive towards which the educational objectives of the Program are directed. | 5 | 55.55 |
| 6. Lack of concerted effort in recruitment by the Admissions Department. | 4 | 44.44 |

Table 2 (Continued)

Weaknesses of the M.B.A. Program as Perceived by the Business Faculty

| Weaknesses | Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| N = 9 | | |
| 7. Initial advisement should be by a faculty advisor, or a coordinator/ director not by Admissions personnel. Advisement procedures need strengthening. | 4 | 44.44 |
| 8. Lack of computer integration in courses. | 4 | 44.44 |
| 9. Admissions standards may be too low. Too many provisionally accepted students in the program. | 3 | 33.33 |
| 10. The capstone course, The Management Game, is not rigorous. Shortage of the necessary hardware and software is a critical weakness. | 3 | 33.33 |
| 11. Lack of coordination between courses. | 3 | 33.33 |
| 12. Lack of leadership in program development. | 3 | 33.33 |
| 13. Insufficient advertising | 2 | 22.22 |
| 14. Very poor academic and extra-curricular facilities. Upgrading of the computer facilities is needed. | 2 | 22.22 |
| 15. Lack of leadership in course development. | 2 | 22.22 |
| 16. Lack of classes on weekends which might be more convenient for students. | 1 | 11.11 |
| 17. Lack of a comprehensive examination by which students may display competency in Management. | 1 | 11.11 |

Table 2 (Continued)

Weaknesses of the M.B.A. Program as Perceived by the Business Faculty

| Weaknesses | Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| N = 9 | | |
| 18. Admissions counseling efforts need strengthening. Admissions Director had plans to let a part-time evening employee handle this important task. | 1 | 11.11 |
| 19. Lack of coordination between Admissions files and those of the Registrar. | 1 | 11.11 |
| 20. M.B.A. graduated students files are not complete in many cases. It is difficult to tell if a student was matriculated initially or provisionally accepted. Other data were missing in many files. | 1 | 11.11 |

OPPORTUNITIES

There are many opportunities for the M.B.A. Program at Dowling according to the respondents. The major opportunity noted by the respondents was to expand the number of majors in the program. Besides a Management major, majors in Marketing, Finance, Accounting and Computer Information Systems could be offered to attract more students into the program and to satisfy the needs of the Long Island business community. It would also make Dowling College more competitive. Business potential in Suffolk County is good and growing progressively. Dowling has most of Eastern Long Island as its potential market at the present time. This advantage will disappear, however,

as others move into Suffolk. Several faculty members noted the opportunity to expand the program before competition becomes too keen. Other M.B.A. programs are planned for Suffolk County so Dowling has a limited time to capitalize on this opportunity. In many cases, the weaknesses listed provide opportunities for improvement. The lack of high technology in the program (a weakness), if corrected, provides an excellent opportunity to attract students. Tuition reduction for Suffolk County employees and for students sponsored by Suffolk County firms would be an excellent means of attracting new students. Opportunities are there but someone must take the lead to capitalize on them. Opportunities are listed in Table 3.

Table 3

Opportunities of the M.B.A. Program as Perceived by the Business Faculty

| Opportunities | Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| N = 9 | | |
| 1. Expansion of the number of majors in the program to include Marketing, Finance, Accounting and Computer Information Systems so as to attract more students, satisfy the needs of the L.I. business community and make Dowling more competitive. | 6 | 66.66 |
| 2. Creation of M.B.A. Executive Program. | 5 | 55.55 |
| 3. Presently, Dowling has most of Eastern L.I. as its potential market. This advantage will disappear as others move into Suffolk County. Expand the program before competition becomes too keen. | 5 | 55.55 |

Table 3 (Continued)

Opportunities of the M.B.A. Program as Perceived by the Business Faculty

| Opportunities | Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| N = 9 | | |
| 4. Improvement of the Management Game. | 3 | 33.33 |
| 5. Utilization of corporate experts as guest lecturers. | 3 | 33.33 |
| 6. Offering a writing forum possibly run by an English professor to put more emphasis on thesis writing. Involve the English professors more in this regard. | 3 | 33.33 |
| 7. Make an agreement with Suffolk County executives to give a tuition reduction to county employees who attend Dowling. A one third reduction has been suggested. The same reduction could be offered to firms that enroll their employees regularly or that enroll more than one student at a time. | 3 | 33.33 |
| 8. Offering a tuition reduction to Oakdale residents in order to create goodwill. | 3 | 33.33 |
| 9. Establishment of undergraduate procedures for students to take graduate courses while still in undergraduate school so as to retain students at Dowling. | 2 | 22.22 |
| 10. Increase Administrative commitment to the program. | 2 | 22.22 |
| 11. Expansion of the internship program. Involve the firms where students work. Dowling's capability in this area is great. | 2 | 22.22 |

Table 3 (Continued)

Opportunities of the M.B.A. Program as Perceived by the Business Faculty

| Opportunities | Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| N = 9 | | |
| 12. Exploration of the possibility of offering courses at places of business (such as Grumman) or in other locations that may be more convenient to students (such as Huntington, The Hamptons, Riverhead, etc.). | 2 | 22.22 |
| 13. Expansion of the public relations aspect of the program to increase enrollment. | 1 | 11.11 |
| 14. Development of a weekend program to accommodate commuting students who find it inconvenient to attend evenings. | 1 | 11.11 |
| 15. There is still time to get in on the groundfloor with high technology integated courses and/or programs. | 1 | 11.11 |
| 16. Expansion of course offerings to aid students who have problems scheduling. | 1 | 11.11 |
| 17. Innovation in scheduling. Try scheduling an M.B.A. course in the morning for students who may work afternoons or nights. | 1 | 11.11 |
| 18. Development of an M.B.A. column in the Dowling newspaper or a new M.B.A. paper or newsletter. | 1 | 11.11 |
| 19. Have an M.B.A. luncheon where students can get to meet and discuss their mutual problems, etc. | 1 | 11.11 |

THREATS

The lack of leadership and coordination presented probably the most serious threat to the program. The limited number of Ph.Ds and the limited full-time faculty involvement in teaching in the program were considered to be major threats. There is a perceived lack of overall coordination, a lack of coordination between the Admissions Department and the Registrar's office and a lack of coordination between the admissions office and the advisor. Faculty members felt there was a lack of effective recruitment, both personal and through advertising, which could result in a lower than expected enrollment which, in turn, would result in more problems and threats in the future. Competition from aggressive M.B.A. programs, on and off Long Island, is perceived to be a threat. Improper advisement could present a serious threat to the success of the program. The acceptance of unqualified or underqualified students presents a threat since it is feared that instructors may lower their standards. Governmental actions and regulations are and can always be a threat. The curtailment of financial aid, the proposed tax law, or other regulations can present problems that will make Dowling react instead of proact as it should. Threats exist but threats in many cases can be overcome thus opening up new opportunities. Threats are listed in rank order in Table 4.

Table 4

Threats to the M.B.A. Program as Perceived by the Business Faculty

| Threats | Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| N = 9 | | |
| 1. Limited number of Ph.Ds in the program. Limited full-time faculty involvement. | 7 | 77.77 |
| 2. Lack of leadership and coordination presents probably the most serious threat to the program. | 6 | 66.66 |
| 3. Competition from aggressive M.B.A. programs on and off Long Island. | 5 | 55.55 |
| 4. Lack of recruitment, personal and through advertising. | 5 | 55.55 |
| 5. Lack of coordination between admissions and advisors. | 5 | 55.55 |
| 6. Improper advisement could present a serious threat to the program's success. | 4 | 44.44 |
| 7. The acceptance of unqualified students - those with low QPAs or GMATs or a combination of the two. | 3 | 33.33 |
| 8. The feeling in the business world that the M.B.A. degree has lost some of its prestige. Because of the increasing number of M.B.A. degrees being granted, many companies no longer afford it the same value as in the past. | 2 | 22.22 |
| 9. Lack of coordination between Admissions and the Registrar's office. | 1 | 11.11 |
| 10. State regulation which causes Dowling to react vs. proact. | 1 | 11.11 |
| 11. Failure to update texts, supplemental readings, etc. | 1 | 11.11 |

Table 4 (Continued)

Threats to the M.B.A. Program as Perceived by the Business Faculty

| Threats | Responses | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| N = 9 | | |
| 12. Lowering grade standards for students instead of making them more stringent. | 1 | 11.11 |
| 13. The loss of financial aid due to potential government cutbacks. | 1 | 11.11 |
| 14. The danger that tax law changes will discourage companies from paying employees' tuition. | 1 | 11.11 |

## DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### DISCUSSION

In order to understand and determine where a program is, internal and external environmental scanning must be done. Internal scannings looks at the strengths and weaknesses of the program while external scanning looks at the opportunities for and threats to the program. Different viewpoints exist based upon who is doing the viewing. In this practicum, only one viewpoint was examined - that of the full-time faculty at Dowling College. Their perceptions of SWOT were requested in a survey and examined for common themes which were identified, listed and then distributed to the Business Administration faculty, the Vice-President of Academic

Affairs and the committees that are concerned with the program. Meskil (1985:1) stated that the scanning process has always been to focus on the future - assuring the long range strength of Dowling by identifying its uniqueness and strengths, by making critical decisions which improve the College's competitive position, and by utilizing its resources prudently in responding to both opportunities and challenges. Pascarella (1984:54) stated that the route to success - strategy - is paved, not with formulas or systems, but with people who are able to think and act in ways that create - and capitalize on - competitive advantage. Dowling College personnel, both Business faculty and administration are creative and competitive individuals. This study was undertaken so that strategic plans could be made and implemented.

IMPLICATIONS

Dowling College is most fortunate in that it has a dedicated, concerned full-time Business faculty. Dowling College is ideally located to serve Suffolk County. The M.B.A. Program is financially beneficial to the College and therefore must survive. Survival will depend to a large degree on competition, present and future, and how this competition is met. Presently, the program is the only M.B.A. program in Suffolk County so the College has the unique opportunity to strengthen it and be prepared to meet incoming competition. Failure to

establish strategic plans for the future would be detrimental to the success and survival of the program. This study was done in order to lay the foundation for strategic planning to meet the challenges of the future.

Instruction is the backbone of any program. Failure to provide the proper instruction would harm the program. The Business faculty noted that not enough Ph.Ds were teaching in the program and secondly that too many courses were being taught by adjuncts rather than the full-time faculty. The limited number of Ph.Ds in the program was also noted by the New York State Education team that visited Dowling. Due to the limited number of full-time faculty and the increased enrollment in the undergraduate programs, full-time faculty participation during the Fall and Spring semesters is limited. In the Winter and Summer terms, the full-time faculty are free to teach M.B.A. courses as overload. As a result of this situation, much of the instruction is by those who have no real concern for the overall success of the program. This situation has serious implications for the future success of the program. The M.B.A. Program at Dowling College is an important one in that it is an incremental earner for the College. The cost of the adjuncts and the few full-time faculty members who do teach in the program is low in comparison to the return. The physical facilities are already there and ususued at the times scheduled for M.B.A. classes so little is added to the

program's overall cost. The return is satisfactory, however, it has not been increasing at a pace equal to Dowling's other programs. Without a better return, brought about by increased enrollment, the program may slowly die. To increase enrollment requires strengthening the program which, in turn, requires environmental scanning and strategic planning.

No program will ever be successful without proper leadership. This program has suffered from a lack of leadership. The recent election by the faculty and the subsequent approval by the Administration of a Director is expected to provide this needed leadership. This appointment was a result of this study and a prior report made to the Vice-President of Academic Affairs. The lack of specializations, noted by two-thirds of the respondents, is a serious situation as it puts Dowling at a disadvantage when compared with competitive M.B.A. programs. Specializations in Marketing and Finance would greatly enhance the program, make it competitive with other programs, and increase enrollment.

Respondents noted that there is no apparent overall goal or directive towards which the educational objectives of the program are directed which, if true, would result in serious repercussions. Further discussion will be required to determine if this is a valid statement. Should it be valid, much effort will be required by the Director to change this situation.

Two major concerns were in the areas of advisement and admissions. The faculty felt that admissions standards should be stringent; that there was a lack of concerted effort in recruitment by Admissions personnel; and that the initial advisement procedures in Admissions should be strengthened through further personnel training or that the initial advisement be done by selected faculty members. Improper advisement could have an adverse effect on the program's future. Noted also was the lack of coordination between the Admissions Department and the Registrar's office.

High technology is the wave of the future and students who are not prepared to take their place in a high tech world will find themselves at a disadvantage. It behooves the educational world to do its part in this preparation. For its part, Dowling must improve its computer facilities beyond the improvement that has recently taken place. Further improvement is expected to take place in the near future as more equipment is received. With the improvement of hardware and software, students will be better prepared for the high tech world. One recent development, a three day computer seminar for the faculty, should bring about a partial solution to one perceived weakness in the program which was that there is a lack of computer integration in courses, due in most part to the lack of knowledge and/or expertise in the use of computers in education.

The capstone course, the Management Game, was considered not to be rigorous. This was also noted by the Middle States team. This weakness has been addressed by the hiring of consultants and the purchase of new software to enhance the Game. The result will be to make the students better managers, more computer oriented and thus satisfy the Middle States team. The program has been strengthened by the action taken.

The expansion of the program by increasing the number of majors offered would greatly enhance the program and increase enrollment. Faculty respondents noted that majors in Marketing, Finance, Accounting and Computer Information Systems should be offered. The general feeling is that the program's future would be ensured by the institution of these majors. Discussions with the Vice-President of Academic Affairs has brought out the fact that this is not feasible at this time, however, there is nothing to prevent the faculty from presenting new courses in each of these disciplines which would make the institution of new majors in the future nothing more than a formalization of an existing condition.

Competition is expected in Suffolk County as one other college has recently expanded into the county and the state university administration has determined that it is feasible for them to begin an M.B.A. program at Stony Brook, one of the larger campuses in the SUNY system. The implications of these actions are serious.

The general feeling, as determined through this survey and in conversations with the Business faculty, was that the program needed an updating if it was to survive the challenges of the future. The program's survival would mean that the survival of Dowling would be enhanced, and that is essential.

The results of this study can have far reaching consequences if the recommendations made are considered and implemented. Some recommendations are more important than others. Priorities must be established and strategic plans made. The Dowling College Business Administration Division faculty and the Administration seem to be ready for such future planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There were a number of recommendations made to the faculty and the Vice-President of Academic Affairs as a result of this study. Some have already been acted upon or are in the process of being acted upon. The results of this study may be the foundation upon which the future of the M.B.A. Program is built. The results will, no doubt, bring about change. This study has brought out the consensus opinion that change is needed.

The major recommendation was that a director or coordinator was needed since the leadership in the program was so fragmented. This recommendation has already been acted upon. A Director of Graduate Business Studies has

been elected by the faculty and approved by the Administration and the faculty union leadership. This Director will receive released time credit for taking on this responsibility.

Another recommendation was that more Ph.Ds were needed in the program. The New York State Education Department has advocated the same thing so full credit may not be due to this study. The important thing is that two Ph.Ds have already been hired to teach in the program. In addition, one of the full-time faculty members has recently received his doctorate. Three others in the Business faculty will receive doctorates within the next year or two. These events have provided and will provide the expanded faculty education that is needed.

The lack of concentrations in the program brought about the recommendation that the program be expanded so degrees could be granted in disciplines other than the present one, Management. Since there was a perceived lack of leadership in course/program development, nothing has ever been accomplished in this regard. Unfortunately, this recommendation will not be acted upon in the near future due to other requests being considered. The Business faculty, in discussion with the Curriculum Committee personnel, have concluded that each new discipline could be gradually introduced through the development of elective courses within the present Management program. When enough courses are in place, the

Administration could request that the State Education Department allow the formalization of an existing condition - programs in Finance and Marketing. The addition of new degrees will add to the stability of the program and should increase enrollment as a result. As a result of this discussion with the personnel of the Curriculum Committee, two Business faculty members, including the author, will present courses for approval. The Finance course is the topic of a practicum for the Curriculum and Program Planning seminar.

Increased advertising was also recommended. The Administration had sensed a need, confirmed by this study, that there was insufficient advertising for the graduate programs - Business and Education. This has been addressed, new ads are now being run and preliminary results look encouraging. Recognition of the existence of the program is essential and advertising provides the medium for such recognition.

The lack of active recruitment goes hand-in-hand with insufficient advertising. This weakness is being addressed through another practicum - a needs assessment of the Long Island business community - which is being done for the Societal Factors Affecting Education seminar. Through this study, it is hoped that a base for recruitment may be developed. An assistant to the Director of Admissions has recently been appointed to handle graduate recruitment.

Advisement and admissions counseling procedures need improvement according to the respondents. A recommendation was made that the newly appointed Assistant Director of Admissions be made solely responsible for admissions counseling and that advisement as to course selection be the domain of the new M.B.A. Director.

As a a result of another recommendation, improved procedures for the flow of paperwork and records between the Admissions office and the Registrar's office have been instituted. Files of newly admitted students are now concentrated in one location, the Registrar's office, and are more up-to-date as a result.

The capstone course, the Management Game, was perceived to be less rigorous than it should have been so a recommendation was made that the Game be improved and that additional hardware and software be acquired to accommodate the students. An outside consultant was brought in to update and develop a new game which has now become an integral part of the program. Additional hardware and software are being acquired which will allow for computer integration in the various courses. The Administration arranged two three day training sessions for faculty members in the use of computers in education. This should add to the overall integration of high technology into the program.

Another recommendation was that more corporate executives be recruited to teach and/or guest lecture.

This would introduce the "real world" into the classroom. In a practicum for Societal Factors Affecting Education, corporate executives are being surveyed to ascertain if they or others in their firms will teach or lecture in the program. If successful, this would also bring about an increased awareness of the program in the business community.

Other recommendations have been made based upon the opportunities and/or threats as perceived by the faculty. They have a lower priority however than those mentioned heretofore. They include:

1. Examine the feasibility of weekend classes.
2. Examine the feasibility of comprehensive examinations before graduation.
3. Examine the admissions criteria and possibly make them more stringent.
4. Emphasize thesis writing. Utilize English professors.

Some recommendations may be acted upon, some may not. Some of the opportunities and/or threats are such that Dowling College personnel cannot take action. These would include possible changes in the tax laws and the reduction of financial aid. College personnel, in general, have limited input into these decisions.

This study, which will be used as a continual guide for the future, if updated periodically, should help ensure the future success and survival of the program which in turn will help ensure the success and survival of

Dowling College itself. What any one university should do to find a balance among the criteria for survival, stability and excellence depends, of course, on its particular circumstances and on the outlook and values of those who seek a viable path for it (Balderston, 1974: 269). It was expected that the particular circumstances of the program, the faculty's outlooks, values and perceptions would be identified as a result of this study and such was the case. New perceptions from the business community, as determined in the Societal Factors Affecting Education practicum, may bring out other ideas and recommendations not perceived by the faculty. Lastly, another study that will survey the students in the program should provide yet another perspective. Put together and properly acted upon, these recommendations will help to ensure success and survival for both the program and Dowling College.

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# APPENDIX A

# ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN SURVEY

Dowling College
Oakdale, Long Island, New York 11769

To: All Full-Time Business Division Faculty

From: James F. Newman, Business Administration

Date: Oct. 1984

Re: Analysis of the M.B.A. Program

The M.B.A. Program at Dowling College, in the minds of many, needs strengthening. A strategic plan for the future must be developed if the program is to succeed and survive. Success and survival depends upon strategic planning, strategic management and a sound organizational policy.

Strategic planning involves environmental scanning, both internally and externally. Many strategists utilize a system that determines the internal strengths and weaknesses as well as the external opportunities and threats. Peter Drucker has stated that management should concentrate on its opportunities. From this environmental scan, strategies for the future are established.

Using the attached pages (and additional pages, if necessary), please give your perceptions of the strengths of, weaknesses of, opportunities for and threats to the M.B.A. Program. Please consider such things as admission procedures, advisement, curriculum, text books, methodology, etc.

The responses will be analyzed and a report made to the Business Administration Division for further discussion and study. From this study, strategies may be developed for the future. A future needs assessment of students and Long Island business executives will be made to supplement this initial study.

Thank you very much for taking your valuable time to respond.

DOWLING COLLEGE - M.B.A. PROGRAM ANALYSIS

Please list and discuss the strengths of the Program - the strongest attributes, i.e. what we do well. Consider such things as curriculum, textbooks, procedures, etc. Where can further improvements be made?

DOWLING COLLEGE - M.B.A. PROGRAM ANALYSIS

Please list and discuss the weaknesses of the Program - those things that prevent Dowling from attaining its objectives. Consider such things as procedures, curriculum, textbooks, personnel, facilities, equipment, etc. How can these weaknesses be overcome?

DOWLING COLLEGE - M.B.A. PROGRAM ANALYSIS

Please think creatively about the Program strengths and how they can be used. Identify opportunities for the Program. Consider such things as curriculum opportunities, enrollment opportunities, opportunities for business relationships, etc. Please list what can be done to take advantage of these opportunities.

DOWLING COLLEGE - M.B.A. PROGRAM ANALYSIS

Please list and discuss the environmental factors that pose a threat to the Program's survival. Consider such things as competition, legislation, regulations, business attitudes, community attitudes, finances, etc. How can these threats be overcome?